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WHERE WERE YOU?**SPECIAL****DEFENSE & IT****We must enlist partners in war against terrorism***By Rep. Tom Lantos*

On Sept. 11, our nation lost its innocence – but it has found a new sense of unity and purpose. This new sense of unity comes from the sudden realization that our democratic way of life is under attack – and it must, and will, be defended.

The immediate challenge in rising to the defense of liberty is to assemble an international coalition supportive of U.S. military action against Osama bin Laden, the al Qaeda network and his Taliban protectors. But that is just the start.

If we are to defeat the threat that terror poses to our nation and our democratic way of life, we must broaden our focus beyond the perpetrators of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and carry the fight to all appropriate fronts, enlisting our partners in this larger struggle. Otherwise, we risk winning the battle but losing the war.

The temptation to personalize the terrorist threat is understandable, especially among the Gulf War veterans in President Bush's Cabinet. During that earlier conflict, the previous President Bush rightly labeled Saddam Hussein as the locus of evil, and thus he wisely focused our military campaign on rolling back Hussein's minions and liberating Kuwait. And although he failed to defeat Hussein entirely, the elder President Bush, Dick Cheney and Colin Powell successfully rallied the nation to defend the world against Hussein's aggression.

The war we are now being called upon to fight against terrorism, however, is fundamentally different from the one we waged in Desert Storm. The enemy is scattered worldwide, not exposed on a single battlefield. Their methods are asymmetrical and treacherous, usually targeting civilians, not combatants. Their motivation is ideological, not political. And their objective is not to seize territory, but to demoralize their adversary.

If we are to prevail in this struggle – as we must – then we cannot limit our efforts to one man or one method. The threat of international terrorism unfortunately



FILE PHOTO

Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.)

extends beyond Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda organization – and so must counterterrorism campaign.

Widening our concept of war and carrying the struggle against terrorism to all fronts is the new national security imperative. In an era of globalized communication, finance and commerce, international terrorists are increasingly cooperating across national and ideological borders, intensifying the overall threat. Evidence is mounting that the Irish Republican Army and the ETA, a Basque terrorist group, for example, are sharing weapons, design and tactical expertise with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a rebel movement that is notorious for its terrorist tactics.

Decapitating the al Qaeda terrorist network by seizing Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants will not prevent surviving cells from drawing support from other terrorist networks – and providing support – to continue cowardly campaigns.

The pressing need to eliminate terrorism's most visible and immediate threat, Osama bin Laden, should not be allowed to interfere with the larger goal of draining the swamps that breed terrorists worldwide. The president should bear this in mind as he assembles an international coalition to support military strikes against Afghanistan.

Waiving some economic sanctions on Pakistan to secure its support as a military staging ground clearly makes sense. But easing pressure on Syria or Iran to shut down their support for terrorist networks in return for their endorsement of the international effort to get bin Laden would be counterproductive.

There are some signs that the administration may understand the need to avoid being blinded by short-term goals. I applaud Secretary of State Powell's effort in the midst of the administration's war-planning to pressure Syria and Lebanon to surrender Hezbollah terrorists operating in their territories, a policy recommended in sanctions legislation I sponsored and which the House of Representatives approved over administration objections earlier this year.

In the post-Cold War period, our response to the threats posed to our way of life by rogue states and the terrorist organizations they harbor has been tepid and episodic. This has to change. The events of Sept. 11 require us to achieve a new clarity of purpose in our foreign policy. We must unite behind Secretary of State Powell's commitment to eradicate terrorism "root and branch." In framing our coming struggle with terrorism, it is critical that we focus on the forest and not just one of the trees.

Rep. Lantos, a Democrat from California, is ranking member of the International Relations Committee.